

Exodus 32:7-14
Psalm 51:1-10
1 Timothy 1:12-17
Luke 15:1-10

Sermon September 11th 2022

Jesus Is There When We Feel Lost

Often times when we hear the parable of the lost sheep, we think about the people in our lives that walked away from the church. Our friends, our children, our spouse, our grandchildren, our siblings. We miss them. We pray for them. We wonder when Jesus will go and bring them back to the fold. We create Sundays where we focus in on those who have become disconnected from our community. Disconnected from our flock. Where we try and welcome them back in some manner or another.

This is one way that we can hear this parable. As a promise that Jesus will welcome back those who have wandered off. Our loved ones, our siblings in Christ, that we pray for often.

Another way we can hear this parable is in a more general sense. Because, we all feel lost at times. We all have moments where we feel disconnected from our flock of sheep.

For example, when we get overwhelmed with expectations, responsibilities, to-do lists, we can feel lost in all the chaos. We can feel disconnected from our community, from God, as we struggle to get to church on Sunday mornings. As, we struggle to live out our discipleship.

When we grieve over the death of a loved one, we can feel lost (**Image**). We can feel disconnected from our community. We can isolate ourselves, as we don't want anyone to see us in that state. We can struggle to see God's presence as we try to make sense of the why?

When we deal with the challenges of aging, we can feel lost. We can feel disconnected from our community. Especially, if we need to move away from our home to receive more care than our loved ones are able to give (**Image**).

When we struggle with a long-term physical or mental illness, we can feel lost. We can feel overwhelmed by all the pain. We can be limited in our ability to access our community. We can feel like people don't understand us or are judging us. We can wonder where God is at as we suffer year after year.

When we face rejection, we can feel lost. We can feel disconnected from our community. Our relationships are so important to our wellbeing, and when one of them fails, it can flip our world upside down. We find ourselves trying to redefine ourselves

without this person. We can withdraw or isolate ourselves, because we don't want people seeing what a mess we are. If we are going through a divorce with a member in the congregation, we can sometimes feel like we do not belong anymore. That both of us can't keep coming to church.

When we go through a pandemic, we can feel lost. We can feel disconnected from our community. Especially, when the church closes its doors for a year (**Image**). Especially, when a lot of ministries moved online, and some of us struggled to have access to these ministries. Especially, when we haven't been able to gather around food. Especially, when we now have strained relationships with friends and family over our differing views around the pandemic.

There are times in our lives where we are the sheep that feel lost. The sheep that feel disconnected from the other sheep. And there are times where we are part of the fold that is longing for the other sheep to return.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus is hanging out with those who feel lost, who feel disconnected from their community. Tax collectors were perceived as puppets of the Roman Empire, and therefore, traitors by their neighbours. People didn't often welcome them to sit at their tables.

Sinners were more often than not people who were labelled unclean. Meaning that they could not re-enter their community until a priest declares that they have been made clean. Many of them felt lost and disconnected from their community, because of these rules.

Instead of judging them like everybody else, Jesus shows them compassion. Jesus tries to understand the pain they are enduring for feeling lost. For feeling disconnected from their community. Jesus sits at their tables. Jesus welcomes them as full participants in the community (**Image**). Despite the push back Jesus is getting from the leaders in the community.

Jesus shares these parables as a response to the protest, to challenge the leaders, the community, us, to live out this hospitality. To welcome the sinner, the tax collector. To welcome back the sheep to the fold. To rejoice when the coin is found.

Jesus shares these parables with us, to also reassure the tax collectors, the sinners, the leaders, the community, us, that Jesus chooses to show us hospitality over judgment. Jesus chooses to welcome us back to the fold when we feel lost. When we feel disconnected from our community.

In fact, Jesus is willing to risk everything. Including his life (**Image**). To reconnect us with God. To reconnect us with our community. To help us feel whole again.

Jesus is willing to risk everything, and invites us as the church to do the same to others. To be there for each other when we feel lost. To practice grace and hospitality. Welcoming people who feel disconnected from community, into our community. Welcoming people back who have felt disconnected from our community. Jesus invites us as the church to do the same to others.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for walking with us when we feel lost. When we feel disconnected from our community. Help us see your presence. Help us feel your grace and hospitality. And encourage us to practice this grace and hospitality to those we meet. Welcoming those who feel lost, and disconnected, into our community.

Amen.

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